

The

Historian

HANCOCK COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

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of Hancock County

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

February 1996

FEBRUARY DINNER MEETING

On Sunday, Feb. 11, we are joining the Pass Christian Historical Society at their dinner meeting at the Pass Christian Yacht Club.

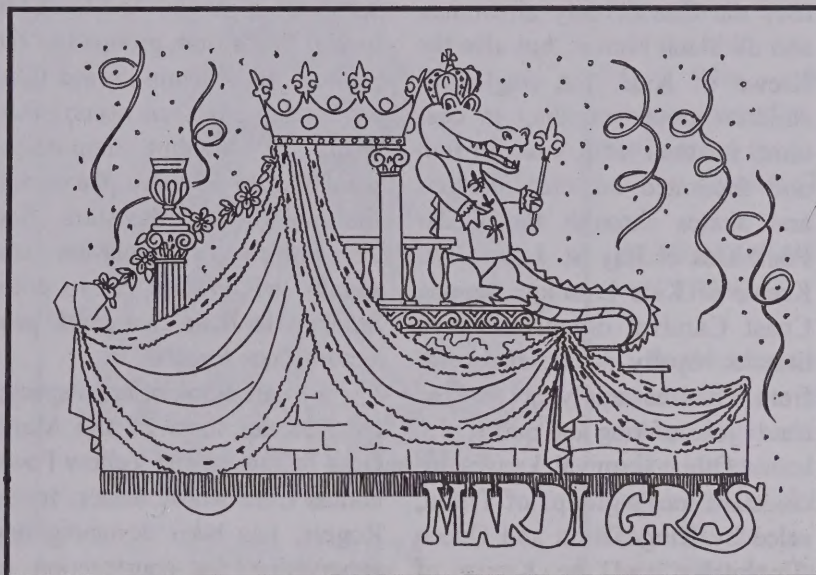
Featured speaker will be historian Stephen Ambrose who will discuss his book *Undaunted Courage*, about the famous explorer Meriwether Lewis.

A cash bar will be available at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m., followed by the Ambrose presentation. A limited number of tickets at \$10 is available at Lobrano House 467-4090.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

HARK! The sweet sounds of hammers and saws are like music to my ears. Construction on the addition to Lobrano House has begun. Last week I drew off the room plan with a stick in the muddy back yard. Today I stood on the sills and joist of the new floor and marked where tables, chairs, computers desks and file cabinets will go. It was pure JOY! I can scarcely dare to believe that it will all soon be a reality. Thank you, one and all for all the work, support and

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MARDI GRAS

On Fat Tuesday in 1699, d'Iberville made camp 60 miles south of what later became New Orleans, and named it *Point du Mardi Gras*. By the late 1700s, masked balls and fetes in New Orleans and Mobile marked the feast day preceding Lent. By the 1800s, costumed maskers on foot and horseback and in carriages were parading through New Orleans.

The first New Orleans Mardi Gras Krewe of Comus was organized in 1857 by the "Cowbellians," a Mobile group that paraded on New Year's Eve.

During the last century, Yankees have been invading our area to savor "America's

Greatest Party", at the same time escaping the rigors of northern winters for a few days. If their sojourn included a bit of golf and sailing under sunny skies, so much the better.

Hancock Countians usually joined the Yankees in their invasion of New Orleans where lavish balls and parades had been solidly established since the 18th century. The formation in 1966 of the all-woman Krewe of Nereids in Waveland was the catalyst for the creation of a number of other local krewes, enabling us to frolic at home during Carnival.

This 1996 season's festivities, which began with king parties on Twelfth Night, end on February 20, Fat Tuesday, with the Krewe

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of Real People, parading this year with 45 units through the streets of Bay St. Louis, in their 15th year as the only black krewe on the Mississippi Coast.

Hancock County boasts not only the Coast's only all-woman and all-black krewes, but also the Krewe of Kids, the single all-children group parading in costume for their 15th year on foot and decorated bicycles, wagons and skates through the Cedar Point area of Bay St. Louis. The Krewe of Kids is unique among Coast Carnival organizations in that its royalty is chosen by lot from children applying for the heady jobs of king and queen.

Other Carnival krewes include the men's groups of Triton, ruled by King Triton and Queen Amphitrite, and the Krewe of Eros, both organized in 1974. Eros began with a single float following King Nereus and Queen Doris in their Nereids parade. Eros still rides but Triton disbanded a few years ago.

In 1975, Diamondhead golfers and boaters began their Mardi Gras festivities with balls and parades. A land group, ruled by King Ali'i Honua and his Queen, began with a gala ball and a parade of decorated golf carts from the Country Club to the Yacht Club at the far end of the subdivision. There they met the Krewe of Kamehemeha as they disembarked from their beribboned yachts. Last year the two merged for a single parade, but they continue to have separate balls.

Mardi Gras royalty sit grandly on thrones on their floats. Their subjects line the parade routes in all manner of costume

stretching their arms and yelling the clarion call of Mardi Gras: "Throw me something, Mister."

The county's parades have grown larger and livelier over the years as bands and marching groups from schools and military installations join in. And there are special floats from groups like the Seabees and Stennis Space Center, bragging of their accomplishments of building impossible structures in faraway places and shuttling through the stars. And the Forestry Commission can usually be counted on to enter Smokey the Bear, that gentle protector of our forests.

Pearlington offers a special treat in the form of the Mardi Gras Indians of the Yellow Pochontas Club whose leader, Irving Rogers, has been designing and supervising the construction of the large and elaborate Indian costumes that are now traditions in the black communities of the region. Mr. Rogers' Indians can be seen in the streets here on Mardi Gras marching along with the Krewe of Real People.

Anyone who feels that Hancock County's festivities aren't enough can hop over to New Orleans or stay on the Coast for balls and parades from Pass Christian to Ocean Springs to Pascagoula to Mobile.

And remember that America's Greatest Party started here, an import from France.

Edith Back

WHY DOES CARNIVAL DATE FLUCTUATE?

Mardi Gras can fall on any Tuesday from February 3 through March 9. The fluctuating date was established by the Catholic Church which designed the Gregorian calendar with a fixed date for Christmas but with moveable dates for other religious days. Easter can fall on any Sunday from March 23 to April 25, and the exact date was set to coincide with the first Sunday after the full moon that follows the spring Equinox. Mardi Gras is always scheduled 46 days preceding Easter (the 40 days of Lent plus six Sundays.)

HISTORY OF THE KING CAKE

The origin of the King Cake can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Popular devotion turned to the Three Wise Men, or Kings, who had followed a star and paid homage to Christ. Epiphany, the end of the Christmas celebration and the 12th night after the birth of Christ, is a time for pageants and giving special "King" presents to children. Today the King Cake is an oval shaped, braided coffee cake which is decorated with cinnamon sugar in the official Mardi Gras colors - gold (for power), green (faith), and purple (justice) - and contains a tiny plastic baby that has replaced the coin used in medieval times. The person who gets the slice of cake with the baby in it MUST host the next party; at some parties, they are crowned king or queen.

**1996 DUES ARE DUE
STILL ONLY \$12.00
Pay now and help replenish
the building fund.**

BAY LITTLE THEATER CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY

The Bay St. Louis Little Theater will celebrate its 50th birthday with a gala at the Bay-Waveland Yacht Club on Saturday, Feb. 24, starting at 7:30 p.m.

Included in the evening's entertainment will be a reprise of the first play enacted by the group in 1946: J.M. Barrie's one act, *The Twelve Pound Look*, starring Emily deMontluzin.

The party features food and a cash bar. Admission is free to BSLLT members. The \$10 admission for others covers a year's membership, so everyone who attends leaves as a member.

Guests are asked to wear cocktail party attire or costumes of their favorite theatrical characters.

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money that you have given during this long planning and fund raising period. I know the rewards will be great when our new area is functional.

Thanks to Dan Ellis for donating a copy of his new book, *The Mississippi Gulf Coast, A Panorama of History and Culture*, (Harrison County Edition).

Mary Leigh Weston donated a copy of the *Bay High Yearbook*, 1940. It contains countless photographs of many of you 56 years ago! NO, you may not cut your photo out.

Dr. and Mrs. Davidson have made another welcome donation to our building fund. They have always been strong supporters of



the Historical Society. Thank you Edwin and Jean.

Eleanore and Bill McCandless donated a copy of *Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, 100 Years*. This is a wonderful book published in 1958 to celebrate our "100 years of Incorporation". (Actually, Bay Saint Louis was incorporated in January 1818). What the heck. I hear it was a great party.

Maggie Hayden donated a copy of Louis Parmer's book on Kemper County to our reference library. Thank you, Maggie. Will have space in our new room to accept donations of Mississippi data, both from the Coast and from up-state.

Last Sunday morning, I addressed a group of 150 honor

students from Pearl River Junior College at the Waveland Resort Inn. Then, Patt Cucullu, Jim and Jean Ann Thriffiley and I conducted the students on a four-bus convoy tour of the City. The college made a donation to our building fund.

Charles Gray

MARDI GRAS TRIVIA

Baubles have been tossed off floats since at least 1871 when a masker costumed as Santa Claus aboard float No. 24 in the Twelfth Night Revelers parade in New Orleans dispensed gifts to the crowd.

Most 19th century Carnival ball invitations were die-cut and printed in Paris.

LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MON. 8 to 4 or by
TUE. 8 to 4 appointment
THU. 8 to 4

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